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Please lay them to rest

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Competing interests:

None declared

West J Med
2001;175:180

These photos overwhelm me with sadness. Whose children are they, frozen in time, bobbing like pickles in a jar, sewn up like footballs, immobilized forever in a carnival-like sideshow calling to the gawkers, the voyeurs who take pleasure in being shocked by the misery of others? Did their parents see any of them, hold them, touch them? Or were they hidden from view? Can we justify what has been and continues to be done to these unfortunate individuals? What useful purpose does it serve to maintain them like this—or even display their photographs in this issue? What medical benefit can come from maintaining this “collection,” other than to know that human development can take many detours along the path to birth. But we know this from medical accounts, and if visual images are

necessary, we could now use sketches to document these events.

I feel shame in collaborating with the continued voyeurism in displaying these images for public view. But perhaps this will spur others to think beyond the shock value of the images. Let us now have some respect for their humanity. Lay them to rest. Ask forgiveness. Put flowers on their graves.

Kathleen Cranley Glass is a lawyer and ethicist. Her research interests concern ethical and legal issues relevant to children, the elderly, psychiatric patients, and research subjects. A focus of her research for the past several years has been ethical issues in clinical genetics and genetic research.

